

# Working in the Disability Sector



The disability sector is one of the fastest growing in Australia. If you are looking for rewarding work, why not consider a role supporting people with disability. Work in a sector where you can make a very real difference to the lives of people with disability and the communities in which we live.



**NDS** National  
Disability  
Services

# What employers look for

When entering the disability sector it is a great idea to understand more about what employers are looking for and what you can do to fast track your career.

- **A positive attitude.**
- **Strong values:** anyone working in the disability sector needs to be ethical and treat people with respect.
- **An understanding of disability and the disability sector.** Do your research [www.carecareers.com.au/starting-out/](http://www.carecareers.com.au/starting-out/) is a good place to start.
- **Ability to work well with others.** The disability sector is all about teamwork and working towards shared outcomes.
- **Punctuality:** being on time for work is important. Your employer will create rosters and schedules to create a fair work environment, and to ensure the needs of the person you are supporting are met.
- **Communication skills and the ability to listen:** listening skills and clear communication are the foundations of quality support. These skills are particularly important when starting out, as some aspects of the work may be new to you. Ask questions and if you are uncertain be sure to seek guidance. Communication is key to growing your skills as a disability support worker.
- **Attention to detail:** this is crucial and will assist you to notice the small things that are important to the person you are supporting.
- **Willingness to learn new skills:** the world is changing faster than it ever has before, and we all have to learn to adapt.



We need people with the right values and skills to deliver quality support for people with disability.

# A checklist to consider

The following checklist might be helpful for you to understand the qualifications and requirements of disability support work and can assist you in gaining entry into the disability sector. Not all of these will be essential but can increase your chances of employment.



## **First Aid Certificate:**

invaluable and essential for most entry-level roles



## **Driver's Licence:**

not all employers will require a driver's licence but for many disability support workers, it is a necessity



## **Qualifications:**

not all employers will require qualifications for an entry-level position, but a Certificate III in Individual Support (Disability) would be highly regarded  
<http://bit.ly/cert3IndSupport>



## **National Police Check:**

a National Police Check will be required for most positions



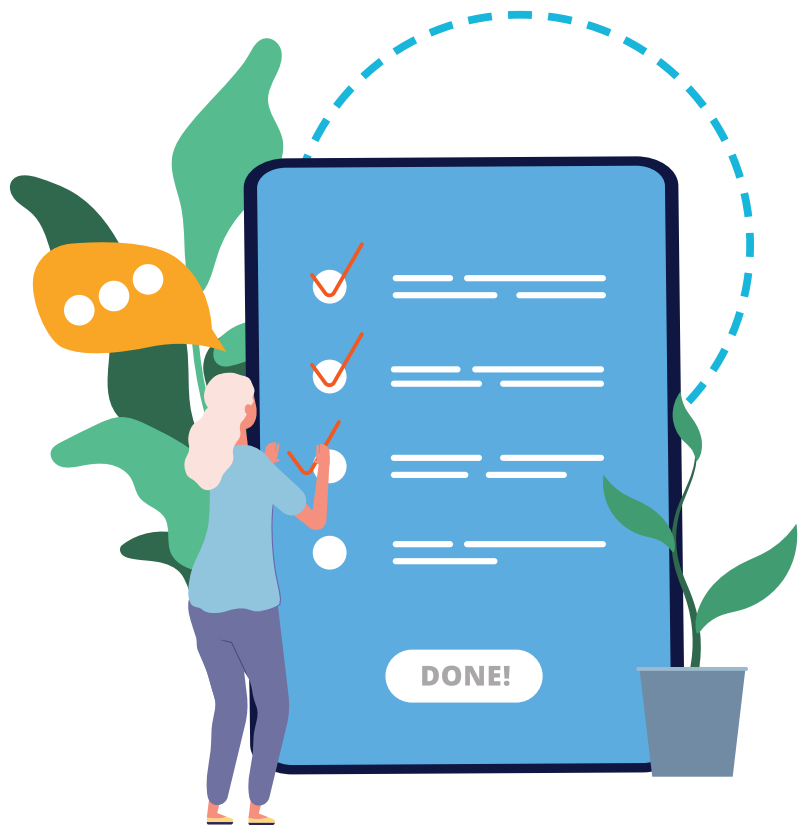
## **Worker Orientation Module: 'Quality, Safety and You'.**

This module explains the NDIS Code of Conduct obligations and will assist you to understand how to support people with disability. This is a mandatory requirement for anyone entering the disability sector  
[www.ndiscommission.gov.au/workers/training-course](http://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/workers/training-course)



## **Working With Children Check:**

employers will require you to undergo a Working With Children Check if you are supporting young people with a disability  
<https://workingwithchildren.wa.gov.au>



# Writing a good resume

Your resume is a key document that informs prospective employers about who you are. A good resume should outline your work experience, key skills and competencies, as well as the value you hope to bring to their organisation. Make sure you address the essential skills listed in any position description and include a personalised cover letter.

## How long should a resume be?

A resume should be brief, concise and relevant, as well as demonstrate why you should be considered for the role. The standard length for a resume is two to three pages.

## Do I need to change my resume every time I apply for a job?

Your resume should address the position requirements specified in the job advertisement and/or position description. Both usually outline the reason for the position, the nature of the opportunity and the key skills required.

A tailored resume, written just for the role, will have much more of an impact than a generic one. Take the opportunity to research and customise the presentation of your skills, experience and motivations to reflect the position description. Demonstrate what makes you a suitable candidate for this particular job.



## What if I don't have much experience?

If your experience is less than what might be required, emphasise the value of the experience you do have and transferable skills. List your responsibilities and achievements, the relevance of your training and qualifications, your specific experience (e.g. volunteering or project achievements), as well as personal traits, values and strengths.

Remember, you still need to be concise and accurate.

## How do I organise my information? What do I include?

The structure of your resume will vary depending on your experience, education and training background. It is important that the information presented is easy to read and highlights key information relevant to the position.

Ensure that your career objective, education and most recent employment history are all on the first page.

# Essential things to include with your resume

## Cover letter

A cover letter is your chance to introduce who you are, and to differentiate yourself from other candidates. Your cover letter should convey your strengths, aspirations and motivation. Convince the employer that you have the right integrity, attitude and character to be a success in the role.

Highlighting key skills mentioned in the position description is worthwhile.

## Personal details

Your personal details should be at the top of your cover letter and resume. You should include your full name, address, phone numbers and email address.

## Career objective / Personal statement (optional)

Including a career objective and personal statement will demonstrate a commitment to personal and professional growth. Show you have considered your career development and how the role you are applying for can help you achieve this. Write this with the position description in mind.

## Education and training

List your education, qualifications and any further training in order, starting with the most recent achievements. Include a brief summary to explain the value and relevance of each course completed.

If you have undertaken many courses over an extended period, then only include the most relevant to the particular role you are applying for, this allows the important courses to stand out and sell you as a candidate.

## Employment history

List your work history chronologically, starting with the most recent role. Include each employer's name, your job title, the dates employed, and your responsibilities, tasks and achievements.

Be concise and give less priority to older roles. What you write should be relevant to the position description.

## Skills, Abilities and Values

Highlight your skills, abilities, values and strengths, keeping these relevant to the role description. Experience in teamwork, reporting skills and clear communication abilities are all positive attributes, and looked upon favourably.

What is a cover letter for?



## Interests

Your interests and hobbies provide a complete, well-rounded picture of yourself. Extra-curricular activities could demonstrate valuable skills to a potential employer - for example, you may have volunteering commitments or be part of a team, whether sporting or social. Your interests may also match the interests of the person with disability you will be supporting so it is important to state what your interests are.

## Referees

Choose people who can vouch for your work ethic and contributions. List their name, position title, organisation and contact details. Make sure they know they will be contacted to provide a reference and alert them to the particular role you have applied for. Alternately, you may prefer to 'provide referees upon request' when an employer shows interest in you.

# Tips for writing your cover letter

### Your covering letter should:

- clearly indicate the position you are applying for; and
- provide a clear link between your skills, experience and abilities in relation to those required for the position.

We recommend you read through the advertisement and accompanying information to understand what skills, experience and knowledge are required for the position. You may want to highlight the key attributes that should be addressed (from the entire content of the advertisement), some of which may include:

- experience and skills; and
- organisational or communication skills.

What employers are looking for:

- matches between your experience, values, skills and attitudes to the position;
- understanding of the employer's needs;
- enthusiasm for the position; and
- demonstration of the values of the organisation.

If a covering letter is requested as part of your application, it should not be a repeat of the information in your resume but rather an opportunity to articulate why the employer should choose you to interview.

**Hint!** Keep the covering letter simple, space text out so it is easy to read and do not forget to spell check!

## How long should your resume and covering letter be?

Whilst there is no stipulation on how long your resume and covering letter should be, as a guide limit your covering letter to between one and two pages, and your resume to between two and three pages.

Always refer to the advertisement, or if in doubt, email or call the contact person listed for their specific requirements.

## What format should your resume and cover letter be?

When applying online your resume and covering letter should generally be saved in MS Word, MS Excel, Adobe PDF, JPEG or GIF format. Submitting Publisher, ZIP or password protected files, may affect the accessibility of your application.

Follow the instructions as outlined in the advertisement for their specific requirements.

It is also recommended that you prepare your resume and covering letter in font size 12 (at a minimum) with a margin of at least 1cm (including top, bottom and sides).

Please note that there is generally a file size restriction to each attachment when submitting applications online.

## Resume checklist



After you have written your resume, and before sending it, do these two simple checks:

1

**Proof read your resume**

2

**Run a grammar and spell check**

Make a note of the positions you have applied for and follow up with each organisation to confirm they have received your resume. This will also give you an opportunity to detail your availability for an interview.

# Interview techniques



**Having the opportunity to present to a selection panel or interviewer, allows you to reinforce your resume by displaying the qualities that make you ideal for the position.**

Here are some tips to help you succeed:

- 1** Be punctual: double check the time and date of the interview, make sure you know the exact location, and arrive early.
- 2** Be prepared: know the name of your primary contact and understand the operations of the organisation.
- 3** Outline your strengths: be ready to explain your strengths and skills, this highlights your capability and reinforces why you are the right person for the role.
- 4** Take extra copies of your resume.
- 5** Be ready for scenario-based questions: these provide you with a situation and ask how you would respond. These types of questions are designed to test your judgement, how well you cope under pressure, and if you are a good problem solver.
- 6** Take your time and listen carefully: consider each question before giving an answer. There's always plenty of time for the interview, so don't feel that you need to rush.
- 7** Ask insightful questions: an interview is the chance for an employer to find out more about you, it is also an opportunity to ensure they are the right fit for you. Your opportunity to ask questions usually comes at the end of the interview. Asking questions will help demonstrate that you are interested in the position, your drive to excel in the role, and that you have done some research.

During the interview it is your chance to showcase experiences which have given you the ability to problem solve, think laterally, resolve conflict, embrace change, and balance multiple competing demands – all qualities which are valued highly.

Even if you have been out of the workforce for some time or are changing your career, think about what transferable skills you have and how you can draw from your life experiences to demonstrate your suitability for the role.

Remember if you don't get the position, be sure to seek feedback and advice. The more you learn, the more confident you will become, helping you with the next job you apply for and increasing your chances of success.



Visit [www.jobsinwadisabilityservices.com](http://www.jobsinwadisabilityservices.com) to register your interest in seeking work in the disability sector.

**Good luck with your application!**